

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please AMEND claims 29 and 30, as follows. For the Examiner's convenience, all claims currently pending in this application have been reproduced below:

1-28. (Cancelled)

29. (Currently Amended) An exposure apparatus comprising:

a reticle stage which holds a reticle;

a projection optical system which projects a pattern of the reticle onto a substrate;

~~a reticle surface plate which is a base plate disposed between the said reticle stage~~
and said projection optical system, ~~and which supports said base plate supporting said reticle~~
~~stage, said reticle surface plate stage and~~ having an opening for transmitting exposure light; ~~and~~

a sheet glass ~~set on said reticle surface plate so as to separate a space inside the~~
~~opening of said reticle surface plate from a space above said reticle surface plate held by said~~
~~base plate at the opening and transmitting the exposure light; and~~

a supply system which supplies an inert gas to a first space and a second space,
the first space being defined by the reticle, said reticle stage, said base plate and said sheet glass,
and the second space being defined by said projection optical system, said base plate and said
sheet glass.

30. (Currently Amended A device manufacturing method comprising the steps of:

~~installing, in a semiconductor manufacturing factory, manufacturing apparatuses~~

~~for performing various processes, including the exposure apparatus defined in claim 29; and~~

~~manufacturing a semiconductor device by performing a plurality of processes~~

~~using the manufacturing apparatuses~~ exposing a substrate to a projected pattern of a reticle using

an exposure apparatus defined in claim 29; and

developing the exposed substrate.